

# 'Premier trainers' compete for Army title

By Patrick Buffett  
Fort Monroe Public Affairs Office

Imagine a world in which your ability to transform raw recruits into combat-capable Soldiers could mean the difference between life and death on the battlefield.

The eyes of every Army leader are, figuratively, upon you. They're counting on you to deliver a Soldier who fully understands the privilege of defending a nation and living the seven Army values – loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage.

When others clock out at 5 p.m., you're still on the trail. Your alarm clock is permanently set at "o-dark-thirty." And a good amount of the limited free time you're allotted is taken up by preparations for the next day's training and squaring away uniforms.

That "world" was in the spotlight June 20 through 24 as 13 active duty and six Reserve drill sergeants from across the nation competed for the title of 2005 U.S.

*Right, Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Herbert Randall, representing Fort Lee, Va., demonstrates his knowledge of the M-249 Squad Assault Weapon during the 2005 U.S. Army Drill Sergeant of the Year competition hosted by Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, Va.*



Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKenzie

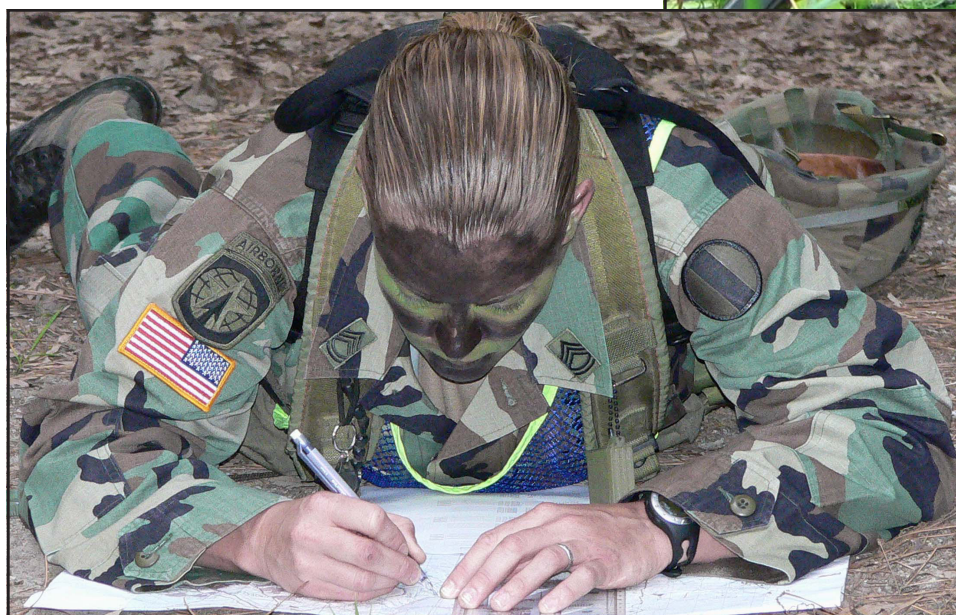


Photo by Romelin Adams

*Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Nicolette Clara, representing Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., plots points on a map during the land navigation portion of the 2005 U.S. Army Drill Sergeant of the Year competition.*

Army Drill Sergeant of the Year. The event culminated with a ceremony at Continental Park, Fort Monroe, in which Staff Sgt. Reynolds Jolly, III, from Fort Sill, Okla., and Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Spencer Swearingen, Jr., from the 100<sup>th</sup> Division, were awarded the title and presented a the Meritorious Service Medal and a gold watch.

"While this is a competition in which we look for the best of the best, it also represents the Army's respect for the drill sergeant," said Command Sgt. Maj. John D. Sparks, lead NCO for Training and Doctrine Command which hosts the event each year.

"Consider for a moment the position





Photo by Patrick Buffet

**Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Spencer Swearingen**  
**100<sup>th</sup> Division**

**2005 U.S. Army Drill Sergeant of the Year for the Reserve Component**



Photo by Patrick Buffet

**Staff Sgt. Reynolds Jolly, III**  
**Fort Sill, Okla.**

**2005 U.S. Army Drill Sergeant of the Year for the active duty**

these men and women are in,” the sergeant major continued. “The recruits they’re training today may well find themselves in Iraq, or some other forward-deployed area, within weeks of completion of their initial-entry training. That’s a reality these NCOs take very seriously. In fact, many of them (approximately 85 percent) have been deployed, and they’re using every resource, to include first-hand experience, to ensure their recruits are properly trained.”

New events were added to the 2005 contest to reflect this “warrior mentality.” A land navigation course, road march and weapons qualification range supplemented the standards of previous years – the Army Physical Fitness Test, hands-on tasks and the appearance before a board of sergeants major representing several TRADOC training centers and schools.

“The warrior tasks added a whole new dimension to the competition,” said Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Jason W. Maynard, the 2004 active-duty DSOY. He and Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Jennifer R. Fowler, last year’s title holder for the Reserve component, choreographed the many components of this year’s contest and spent

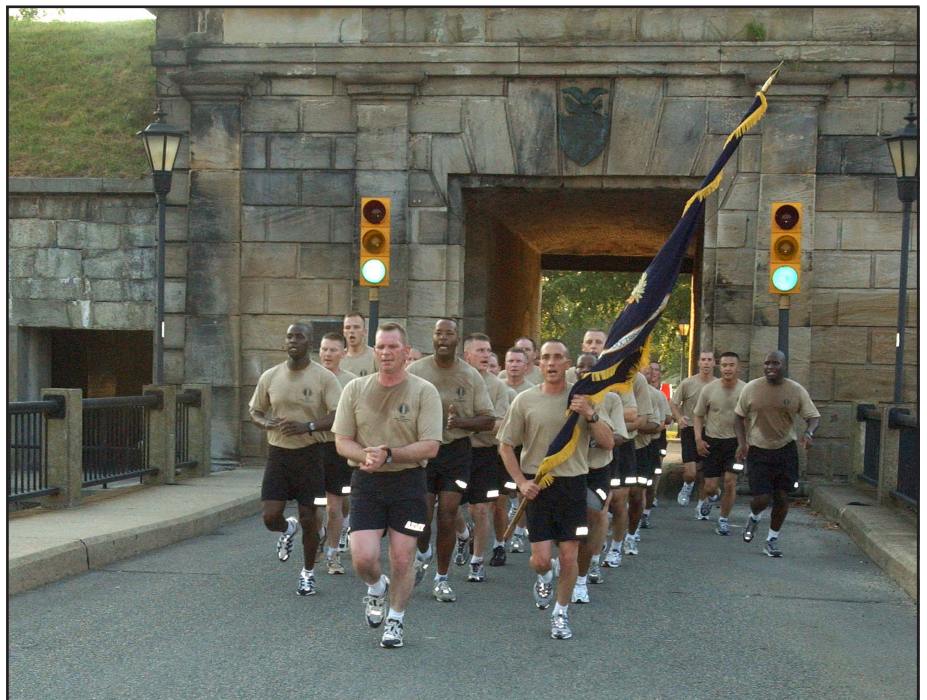


Photo by Patrick Buffet

*After three days of intense competition, the Drill Sergeant of the Year competitors share their warrior spirit with Fort Monroe, Va., during an early morning run. The training session was led by Command Sgt. Maj. John D. Sparks, TRADOC command sergeant major, pictured front and center.*



the past week pointing candidates in the right direction and constantly monitoring safety.

“Why shouldn’t we expect these candidates to demonstrate the same warrior skills they teach on a regular basis?” Maynard posed. “We incorporated events that highlight all of the drill sergeant’s strongest attributes – innovation, attention to detail, the ability to perform under pressure, and the desire to lead and train.”

The new tasks also offered more opportunities to advance in the competition, Fowler noted. In previous years, a whole lot was riding on the opening APFT event where a maximum score, according to Army standards, was only considered “average” among competitors. Low scorers had to be nearly perfect in the three remaining events to remain in the running for the title.

“When I competed last year, it was fairly easy to size up the competition almost on the first day. But that wasn’t the case over the past week,” Fowler said. “There were a lot more events to emphasize strengths and weaknesses, and that aspect made it far more psychological.”

Maynard and Fowler also highlighted one of the surprise tasks they wove into this year’s competition. Shortly after lunch on Monday, candidates took turns filing into a fitness center classroom where they were given ten minutes to correctly place an assortment of ribbons, badges, nametags and insignia on a male and female Class A uniform jacket. Incorrect measurements of even a fraction of an inch resulted in a point deduction.

“We used NCO uniforms with a good assortment of ribbons and badges, so it was pretty tough,” commented Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Bradley Scott, the event grader from U.S. Army Accessions

Command. Other installation NCOs who served as graders during the competition included Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Mark Mounce, Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Michael Menapace, Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Mitzie Walters, Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Laura Reyes and Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class George Shell. Initial-entry Soldiers from Fort Eustis, Va., also took part in the event.

Each DSOY candidate was asked to demonstrate their ability to instruct an Army fitness exercise and in-ranks inspections with and without weapons during the indoor, hands-on portion of the competition. The reservists were the first to appear before the sergeants’ major board. Their questions differed from the active-duty board, also conducted earlier in the week. General topics for both sessions included current events, wear and appearance of the Army uniform, and regulations associated with Army training. Each appearance lasted up to 40 minutes.

The competition moved to Fort Eustis on June 22. DSOY candidates used a map and compass to locate four points in a heavily wooded training area. That was followed by the road march and an additional set of surprise tasks – load, fire and clear an M-249 SAW; apply a tourniquet and call for a medical evacuation; and teach a class on proper building clearing procedures. The final event was the weapons range where participants qualified on the M-16 rifle. The standard “pop-up” range presented targets 50 to 200 meters away. The drill sergeants fired from kneeling and standing positions.

As predicted by the TRADOC command sergeant major prior to the start of the competition, only a few points separated the 2005 DSOY winners from the rest of the pack. “It’s a close race every year. Drill sergeants are highly competitive by nature. They play to win,” Sparks said.





But they are also creatures of respect, honor and integrity. They may return home doubting some aspect of their performance, but “they’ll look you in the eye and honestly tell you it was a good competition,” Sparks said.

“Everyone uses the expression ‘they’re all winners’ during this type of event, but this is a case where they truly are winners,” the sergeant major added. “Each candidate got to this level because of his or her accomplishments within their training battalion, brigade, regiment and so forth. They are the best of the best.”

They have also played an important role in an annual event that brings well-deserved recognition to the drill sergeant corps. “This puts a face on our profession,” Fowler said. “It downplays the Hollywood image of what we do. And it hopefully encourages young NCOs to sign up for drill sergeant duty.”

Both Fowler and Maynard offered the same words of advice to candidates and the overall competition winners. “First off, communicate,” said Maynard, who will be heading for Fort Carson, Colo., and a possible deployment to Iraq, once he wraps

up his current duties. The new active Army DSOY winner will eventually take his place at Monroe and become the TRADOC advisor on drill sergeant issues.

“You may have an idea or training method that works at Fort Jackson (S.C.) or Fort Sill (Okla.) that could actually benefit the whole Army,” Maynard continued. “And the NCO who sits in this chair can’t do his or her job effectively without input.

“Secondly, tell it like it is,” he added. “Commanders need our honesty. Speak up if it’s broken.”

“Remember also that it’s always about the people, not the image,” said Fowler, who is on her way to nursing school at Lenoire Rhyne College in Hickory, N.C. “Think of the private who recently earned a Purple Heart just six weeks out of [training]. Never speak in terms of ‘if we deploy,’ but ‘when we deploy.’”

“Keep in mind that what we truly emphasized here is the impact of the drill sergeant,” Fowler said. “We have an enormous responsibility as the Army’s first leaders, and it’s our job to maintain the positive image of our profession.”

*Below, Sgt. 1st Class Jennifer Fowler, far left, and Sgt. 1st Class Jason W. Maynard, far right, the 2004 U.S. Army Drill Sergeants of the Year for the Reserve and active-duty components, respectively, pose with participants of the 2005 Army DSOY competition. Individuals pictured and organizations they represent are as follows: (back row, from left to right) Sgt. 1st Class Lloyd Mason, Fort Sam Houston, Texas; Staff Sgt. Detrick Smiley, Fort Rucker, Ala.; Staff Sgt. Orlando Gonzalez, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.; Staff Sgt. Todd Drickel, 98th Division (USAR); Sgt. 1st Class Herbert Randall, Fort Lee, Va.; Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Snyder, Fort Eustis, Va.; Staff Sgt. Clint Mitchell, Fort Jackson, S.C.; Sgt. 1st Class Spencer Swearingen, Jr., 100th Division (USAR); Staff Sgt. John Olson, 95th Division (USAR); (front row, left to right) Staff Sgt. Reynolds Jolly, III, Fort Sill, Okla.; Staff Sgt. Roger Matherson, Fort Benning, Ga.; Sgt. 1st Class Nicolette Clara, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.; Staff Sgt. Daniel Mendez, Jr., Fort Knox, Ky.; Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Hartwig, Fort Bliss, Texas; Sgt. 1st Class Cedric Davis, 100th Division (USAR); and Staff Sgt. Eugene Yockey, 104th Division (USAR).*



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Rodney White, U.S. Army Accessions Command, Fort Monroe, Va.